

## What They Don't Teach You in Sunday School



In my former career working as an engineer, a management book entitled *What They Don't Teach You at Harvard Business School* was published. It stirred up a lot of attention in the business world as most of the professionals did not attend Harvard Business School. It was a kind of vindication for those with a less academic pedigree stressing common sense and real world experience. It also stressed a new awareness of how successful businesses operate and put the accepted stodgy standard of business on notice. I benefitted from that book and implemented many of the principles in my own secular career.

Something similar happened to me in my spiritual life. I read and studied the book of Isaiah and it changed my path dramatically from the one laid out for me by my previous Christian teachers in the Baptist church and Evangelical Christianity. Most of the brethren who are part of the modern Messianic movement have a similar testimony. At the heart of the transition is the revelation that God is not done with the Jewish people and Israel. More than that, there are fundamental differences from the accepted hollow, superficial teaching of the church as compared with direction of Messianic teaching.

Some of the differences are obvious: Sabbath instead of Sunday, the Levitical feasts as opposed to Christmas and Easter, Grace versus Law, etc. These have been discussed in the course of the growing Messianic movement, but they have also exposed a lack of understanding that all of us have about our faith. Even Messianics are struggling to overcome their past teaching as they turn to the Torah and hear the voice of God from the mountain.

I would like to pass on part of my spiritual journey. These issues are several things I have come to understand that I don't believe my previous teachers ever understood themselves. These are not criticisms about them. Instead, these are revelations that moved me forward in my walk. At first glance, you may think that you are already there in your understanding, but I urge you to consider the matter more deeply and make yourself more aware of how you are walking out

your faith. This was the premise and the value of the business book I mentioned earlier. I hope that this article will do something similar and shorten your path to a fuller understanding of our Messianic faith.

## **Grace came before the Law**

In Sunday school, we were told that God created the heavens and the earth. Then He worked with the ancient fathers until the exodus from Egypt. Moses received the Law (that's how they got saved) and the children of Israel settled in the Promised Land. Then the Kings and the Prophets came with swords and battles before the Messiah came with a boatload of Grace. Therefore, Grace is the special ingredient that makes the Messiah and the church completely different from all of the Biblical past.

The implications of this teaching make the first obstacle you will face when sharing your new Messianic faith with family members and church brethren. They will explain that Grace, which came after the Law, has completely changed how we live and believe, how we are saved, and how God works with us today. They rebuff anything to do with *obeying* God by pulling out the "Grace" card.

Let us look at how the ancients were saved. Not only were they physically saved, but they were also spiritually saved. Since the Law wasn't given until Moses, how then was Noah, for example, saved?

*But Noah found favor [grace] in the eyes of the LORD.*

## **Genesis 6:8**

This is the first time in Scripture that God's grace is specifically cited in a person's life. God chose to save Noah and his family, not because of their righteousness - even though he had a righteous testimony (Gen 7:1), but because of God's gracious choice. Therefore, Noah was saved by grace. Sunday school never taught this.

It turns out that everyone has been saved the same way - by God's gracious choice - beginning with Adam up to this present day. No one was ever saved by offering sacrifices for sins or by being righteous in their behavior. I was taught in Sunday school that salvation by grace was a New Testament, only by the Messiah, thing that came after the Old Testament. That simply is not true.

Consider this for a moment: If everyone is saved by grace, it solves all kinds of theological problems for the doctrine of salvation. But, maybe you are asking yourself, how does the Messiah get credit for saving Noah and others? The answer is as simple as God's grace. We believe the Messiah came (God's promise) and our faith is counted for righteousness which leads to God's grace. The ancients believed that God would send a redeemer and their faith was

counted as righteousness which led to God's grace. This is specifically stated for Abraham.

*Then he [Abram] believed [the promise] in the LORD; and He reckoned it to him as righteousness.*

### **Genesis 15:6**

Consider this point on an even greater scale. The children of Israel are called the chosen people. Who chose them and why were they chosen? God did the choosing (as an extension of His promise to the fathers) and gave the same grace (unmerited favor) that Abraham received earlier. As God said of Abraham...

*For I have chosen him, in order that he may command his children and his household after him to keep the way of the LORD by doing righteousness and justice; in order that the LORD may bring upon Abraham what He has spoken about him.*

### **Genesis 18:19**

Sunday school never taught me that I was one of the chosen people. They told me that I was of the seed of Abraham (Gal 3:16) but not that I was one of the children of Israel. They told me that salvation by grace came after the Law as a result of the Messiah.

Grace did not come after the Law, nor did it replace the Law. The truth is grace came before the Law and no one is saved by the Law; everyone is saved by the grace of God. This includes Noah, Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, the children of Israel, and everyone else who is part of God's kingdom. I have also learned from Moses and the Messiah that the Messiah was there even before grace or the Law.

### **God keeps His covenants forever**

In Sunday school, I was taught that agreements between God and men were called covenants. Everyone told me that they were special agreements but then they worked just like agreements between men. One guy promises to do something and the other guy promises to do something else. As long as both do their thing then the agreement works. But if one guy doesn't keep his part, the agreement falls apart. They told me that covenants were conditional, namely, both guys must do their part to make it work. This seemed to make sense because they also said the same about marriage, since it is a covenant as well. Both parties must do their part and be faithful to the agreement.

Sunday school taught me that God made a covenant with Israel, but then Israel didn't keep the agreement, so God dropped Israel, and made a new

agreement (the New Covenant) with the church. Somehow, the church has been able to keep the agreement all of these years and not make the same mistakes that Israel made.

I have learned since that God is not a man and He does not break His covenants. Even when Israel made covenant with God and then rejected the LORD and broke His covenant, God has refused to reject them or break His covenant with them.

*If they confess their iniquity and the iniquity of their forefathers, in their unfaithfulness which they committed against Me, and also in their acting with hostility against Me - I also was acting with hostility against them, to bring them into the land of their enemies - or if their uncircumcised heart becomes humbled so that they then make amends for their iniquity, then I will remember My covenant with Jacob, and I will remember also My covenant with Isaac, and My covenant with Abraham as well, and I will remember the land. For the land shall be abandoned by them, and shall make up for its sabbaths while it is made desolate without them. They, meanwhile, shall be making amends for their iniquity, because they rejected My ordinances and their soul abhorred My statutes. Yet in spite of this, when they are in the land of their enemies, I will not reject them, nor will I so abhor them as to destroy them, breaking My covenant with them; for I am the LORD their God. But I will remember for them the covenant with their ancestors, whom I brought out of the land of Egypt in the sight of the nations, that I might be their God. I am the LORD.*

### **Leviticus 26:40-45**

God's covenants and agreements are truly original in this one quality – God keeps both parts of the covenants. This is why the Messiah had to pay the price of His life for us. He was keeping our part of the agreement. This didn't begin with Moses. This began with Abraham and his agreement for all of his descendants and for the Promised Land.

In Genesis 15 God instructed Abraham to flay and divide out five sacrifices. Abraham was made to sleep and God walked between the sacrifices. Abraham did not. This signified that God would keep His part of the agreement and Abraham's part as well.

Sunday school never taught me that Adonai is an awesome God who keeps His covenants forever and offers loving-kindness to those who love Him and keep His commandments.

*And I prayed to the LORD my God and confessed and said, "Alas, O LORD, the great and awesome God, who keeps His covenant and lovingkindness for those who love Him and keep His commandments,"*

### **Daniel 9:4**

I have learned from Moses and the Messiah that God even keeps my part of the covenant and pays the price for my shortcomings.

### **Communion is part of the Passover Seder**

In Sunday school I was taught that communion, the ceremony of taking a small bit of cracker and a small sip of grape juice was a remembrance of the death, burial, and resurrection of the Messiah. It is true that the Messiah offered similar elements to the disciples as specific symbols for the inauguration of the New Covenant; however, the entire context of His actions was based on and in the midst of the Passover Seder meal. The Passover was never taught, nor did the church ever eat the whole Passover meal.

The Passover Seder meal was the first of many significant changes in my spiritual growth toward Messianic theology. I suddenly realized that there was much more to communion with the Messiah for His work of redemption. I learned that God had planned my redemption all the way back to the foundation of the world and started accomplishing it in the story of Joseph. I learned that the children of Israel were covered by the blood of the lamb and taught living in Egypt (*Mitzrayim*) was more than just slavery and oppression; it was "trials and tribulations" (the meaning of *mitzrayim*) associated with sin. I also learned of God's judgments and His loving-kindness toward me. I learned that the Passover Seder was the Gospel message the church had not been teaching, even though every Gospel documents His participation.

Why didn't Sunday school teach the Passover lesson? The Messiah and His disciples kept it. The evidence is clear that the first century believers kept it. Paul instructed his disciples to keep it with all of its meanings.

*Clean out the old leaven, that you may be a new lump, just as you are in fact unleavened. For Messiah our Passover also has been sacrificed.*

### **I Corinthians 5:7**

Paul even gives a detailed account in I Corinthians chapter 11, verses 23 through 28, of how the Messiah ate the afikoman (the matzah eaten after the meal) and offered the third cup of the Seder, the *cup of redemption*, in the Passover meal as a symbol of His work of redemption. His exhortation to eat it separated from other meals and to eat it in a proper manner are the basic commandments of the Passover meal from Moses. Why was this not taught and observed?

Somehow Sunday school teachers had completely separated the bread and the cup out from the Passover, making it the ordinance of the church and a sacrament. How odd. I have learned from Moses and the Messiah that Passover is the Feast of Redemption, remembering the transition from death to life by the blood (life) of the lamb. It is not crumbs and sips of juice; it is a feast with an overflowing cup and a satisfying meal.

### **Baptism is preparation to hear God's voice**

In Sunday school I was taught about baptism. Since I was in a Baptist church, I learned that the prescribed method of baptism was to be completely immersed. The Baptists pointed out that they were different from the other churches because of their method of baptism. Apparently, others didn't immerse; they either sprinkled or poured some water on the person being baptized. As far as I could tell it was about getting some of your clothes wet. I also was taught by another protestant church that baptism was part of the "plan of salvation." You had to be baptized to be "saved." But none of these folks ever told me that baptism began back at Mount Sinai when God gave the Ten Commandments and the Torah to Moses.

When I began to learn the Torah, I discovered that God commanded the children of Israel to take a bath (a mikveh, the Hebrew word for "baptism") before God came down to the mountain to speak to them. Apparently, God had given quite a bit of water out of the Rock for the children of Israel; they were able to even bathe in it.

Suddenly, I began to understand the story of John the Baptist. John was in the wilderness baptizing people trying to get them ready for the coming King (Messiah). It was preparation to hear God's voice and instruction.

In Sunday school, I was told that the purpose of baptism was to reflect something that had already happened, not in preparation for something to happen. I was told that it was a symbolic act of obedience and that it symbolized the death, burial, and resurrection of the Messiah.

*Or do you not know that all of us who have been baptized into Messiah Yeshua have been baptized into His death? Therefore we have been buried with Him through baptism*

*into death, in order that as Messiah was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, so we too might walk in newness of life.*

### **Romans 6:3-4**

That is what Paul said about baptism. It is a reminder of being passed from death to life (the Passover). But Paul was trying to correct some misconceptions that had arisen about grace apart from the Passover. Apparently, the believers were flaunting the grace of God and His forgiveness to continue in sin and to increase in sin. Paul was trying to point out that the baptism was not only the picture of the Messiah's redemption (we were cleansed from sin) but it was preparation for us to hear God's commandments and instructions so we could walk before Him clean, not to sin again or sin even more! Here is the rest of Paul's teaching.

*What then? Shall we sin because we are not under law but under grace? May it never be! Do you not know that when you present yourselves to someone as slaves for obedience, you are slaves of the one whom you obey, either of sin resulting in death, or of obedience resulting in righteousness? But thanks be to God that though you were slaves of sin, you became obedient from the heart to that form of teaching to which you were committed, and having been freed from sin, you became slaves of righteousness. I am speaking in human terms because of the weakness of your flesh. For just as you presented your members as slaves to impurity and to lawlessness, resulting in further lawlessness, so now present your members as slaves to righteousness, resulting in sanctification.*

### **Romans 6:15-19**

Baptism is the preparation of the believer to hear and receive the instructions of God. The Torah is "the teaching" that we are to obey from the heart. The Messiah in the New Covenant wrote His commandments on the tablets of our hearts. We are to walk away from sin and walk upright before God. The commandments of God help us to do exactly that.

In Sunday school, I was told that you only need to get baptized once. In the Torah, I learned that godly men took a mikveh bath every time they went to hear God speak to them at the temple. I learned that every year at Shavuot (Feast of Weeks or Pentecost) they were mikvehed. They did it to proclaim their faith in God and to prepare their hearts to hear God's voice and instruction.

Every Shavuot, the Feast of Weeks, I proclaim my faith in Messiah Yeshua and take a mikveh bath. I do it publically. I don't want anyone to mistake my testimony in the Messiah. I take my mikveh bath seriously; at that moment I remember what God has done for me, passing me from death to life. I remember He has made me a new man in Him and I desire to hear His instruction and to walk in His ways. This is what I learned from Moses and the Messiah.

### **Abraham was not a Jew**

In Sunday school I was taught that the world was divided into two distinct groups before God. There were Jews and there were Gentiles. It was obvious that we were in the good group because there were way more Gentiles than there were Jews. I was also taught that the Jews were part of Israel (the group that didn't believe in Christ) and we were part of the Church (the group that did believe in Christ).

It really came as a shock to me later when I found out that most Gentiles weren't part of the Church and they didn't believe in Christ either. But the most stunning thing was that the world was not as simple as I had been told. The first believers of the Messiah were not Jews nor Gentiles, they were Hebrews.

Believing in the Messiah started with Abraham. He was a Hebrew (there were no such people as Jews back then). Then there were Isaac and Jacob. They weren't Jews either. Then Jacob had sons and one of his sons was named Judah. He wasn't a Jew either. He was just one of the sons of Jacob and part of the children of Israel. When the tribe of Judah traveled to the Promised Land with the other tribes and entered the Promised Land, they still weren't called Jews. They were all called Israelites. It wasn't until much later when Israel was divided into two kingdoms that the term Jews began to be heard. The southern kingdom under the House of David was in the land of Judea. Anyone and everyone who lived in Judea and belonged to Jerusalem were called Jews (short for the people of Judea).

Because the church taught that everything about "unbelief" in the Messiah was Jewish it was logical that everything in the Old Testament was "Jewish" and about "unbelief." If you just take a moment to consider this ignorance it should make you laugh; however, to this day church people still think like this. They are so simplistic in their ignorance they think Abraham was the first Jew.

Sunday school did not teach me that belief in the Messiah began with Abraham, yet it was Abraham who promised to Isaac and us the lamb of God.

*And Abraham said, "God will provide for Himself the lamb for the burnt offering, my son."*

**Genesis 22:8**

In the Exodus, it was the blood of the lamb that protected the Israelites so that death passed over them. It was John the Baptist who first introduced Yeshua to us as the Messiah. He referred to Him as the promise of Abraham – the Lamb of God.

*The next day he [John the Baptist] saw Yeshua coming to him, and said, “Behold, the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world!”*

### **John 1:29**

Sunday school did not teach me that I was part of Israel since I believed in the Messiah. Oh, they mentioned that verse about being the seed of Abraham, but they never carried out the full teaching. For example, Ishmael was born of Abraham but he wasn't the son of promise. We learned that Isaac was the son of promise, but one of his sons wasn't the son of promise, Esau. It was Jacob who was the seed of Abraham leading to the Messiah. Then Jacob, of course, was named Israel. Therefore, beginning with Abraham the believers of the Promised Son of God are descendants of Israel. This is what Paul was referring to in the book of Romans.

*But it is not as though the word of God has failed. For they are not all Israel who are descended from Israel; neither are they all children because they are Abraham's descendants, but: “through Isaac your descendants will be named.” That is, it is not the children of the flesh who are children of God, but the children of the promise are regarded as descendants.*

### **Romans 9:6-8**

Belief or unbelief is not based on being Jewish or Israelite. Belief is based on being the children of Promise, the true descendants of Abraham. Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob were not Jews; they were Hebrews, but more importantly, they believed in their God. Those who trust the Messiah believe in the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. This is what I learned from Moses and the Messiah.

### **Paul was a Pharisee**

In Sunday school, I was taught that the Apostle Paul was the primary author of the New Testament. Not only that, but the Apostle Paul is quoted by churchmen even more than the Messiah when it comes to understanding our New Covenant faith in practice and custom. I have actually heard pastors and churchmen state their allegiance to the Apostle Paul even when disputing words spoken by the Messiah. For example, Paul wrote the book of Galatians and they

are quick to quote that book against the words of Yeshua when He said, “Think not that I came to abolish the Law...”.

In Sunday school, I heard the testimony of Paul given in the New Testament.

*Paul began crying out in the Council, “Brethren, I am a Pharisee, a son of Pharisees; I am on trial for the hope and resurrection of the dead!”*

**Acts 23:6b**

*... since they have known about me for a long time previously, if they are willing to testify, that I [Paul] lived as a Pharisee according to the strictest sect of our religion.*

**Acts 26:5**

*[Paul was] circumcised the eighth day, of the nation of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, a Hebrew of Hebrews; as to the Law, a Pharisee;*

**Philippians 3:5**

Sunday school taught me that when Paul left being a Pharisee he left the Torah and the customs of Moses. This is false! Paul left being a Pharisee! By the way, the Pharisees don't follow the Torah. This is as Messiah Yeshua said when He faced the Pharisees.

*For if you [the Pharisees] believed Moses, you would believe Me; for he wrote of Me. But if you do not believe his writings, how will you believe My words?*

**John 5:46-47**

Paul was famous for taking on his former brethren the Pharisees. This was part of the argument in Acts 15 when the Pharisees who believed in Yeshua argued that the new Gentile believers had to keep the Law the way they did in order to be saved. This is the reason why some Pharisees took vows to bring about the death of Paul and why rumors sprung up about Paul teaching Jews not to keep the customs of Moses.

To this day, many believers believe that when Paul ceased to be a Pharisee he ceased to keep the Law, worship at the temple, or keep the customs of Moses. I guess it is a form of poetic justice. Paul conspired with others to falsely accuse

Stephen of that very thing, although it wasn't true of Stephen either, and Stephen was stoned to death because of it. Even to this day there remains a rumor and false accusation against Paul that he was opposed to the Torah (the Law).

When I learned what Pharisees actually believe and how it differs from Moses, I understood Yeshua's opposition to them. I also came to appreciate the arguments of the Apostle Paul about the Law, which are directed at the Pharisees and their misinterpretations and misapplications. His arguments are brilliant and correct, but if you do not understand what a Pharisee thinks and you do not know what the Torah really says, then a simple person could easily misunderstand what Paul was really saying, even concluding that Paul was opposed to the Torah. Maybe this is why Peter made that comment about those who opposed the Apostle Paul.

*... just as also our beloved brother Paul, according to the wisdom given him [his understanding of the Pharisees], wrote to you, as also in all his letters, speaking in them of these things, in which are some things hard to understand, which the untaught and unstable distort, as they do also the rest of the Scriptures [the Torah], to their own destruction. You therefore, beloved, knowing this beforehand, be on your guard lest, being carried away by the error of unprincipled men, you fall from your own steadfastness,*

## **II Peter 3:15-17**

Sunday school didn't tell me that they were distorting the teachings of Paul and the Law of Moses. I learned that later from Moses and the Messiah.

### **The Apostles kept Sabbath, worshiped at the Temple, and assembled in synagogues**

In Sunday school, I was taught that after the Messiah ascended the Mount of Olives the disciples went back and organized themselves into apostles and they began to form churches and make deacons, pastors, teachers, and prophets. Hymnals and Bibles were given to everyone and the true church met on Sunday mornings and Sunday evenings. I was told that today we do exactly as they did after the Messiah left.

Actually, only a few people really thought this but since no one was questioning what really happened back then it was accepted as the truth.

The average Christian has no understanding of church history, nor what issues faced the first believers of Yeshua. They don't know how the first assembly of believers was actually in Jerusalem, where they kept Sabbath,

worshipped daily at the temple and fellowshiped in homes. They made all things common amongst themselves.

*And the congregation of those who believed were of one heart and soul; and not one of them claimed that anything belonging to him was his own; but all things were common property to them.*

### **Acts 4:32**

James, the brother of the LORD, became the congregational leader remaining in Jerusalem until his death. Peter and John emerged as leaders preaching and teaching throughout the land of Israel. These three were the de facto leaders of the believers in Yeshua of Nazareth. They proclaimed His resurrection and messiahship while doing many public miracles.

When persecution came, first in the death of Stephen, the believers began to spread out from Jerusalem to other communities and joined their local synagogues. They didn't build church buildings. So prolific was the increase in the believers that they became known as the sect of the Way. The Apostle Paul admitted to being a part of that group.

*But this I admit to you, that according to the Way which they call a sect I do serve the God of our fathers, believing everything that is in accordance with the Law, and that is written in the Prophets;*

### **Acts 24:14**

Christianity (as we will call it) was for the most part a Jewish and Israel sect only. It had not spread to the Gentiles in any great numbers. The first evidence of the Gentiles becoming believers is found in Acts 8 where Phillip led an Ethiopian eunuch to the LORD. Then in Acts 10 Peter led a Roman centurion name Cornelius and his house to the LORD. The testimony of Gentiles accepting the faith came back to the apostles and brethren in Judea by Acts 11; however, those from Judea were for the most part still sharing only with Jews who were scattered in Gentile lands such as Phoenicia, Cyprus, and Antioch of Asia Minor (modern Turkey). It was then that Gentiles began sharing with Gentiles.

*So then those who were scattered because of the persecution that arose in connection with Stephen made their way to Phoenicia and Cyprus and Antioch, speaking the word to no one except to Jews alone. But there were some of them, men of Cyprus and Cyrene, who came to Antioch and*

*began speaking to the Greeks also, preaching the Lord Yeshua.*

## **Acts 11:19-20**

But let's stop for a moment. When did they worship, where did they worship, and how did they worship? The book of Acts answers these questions. They kept the commandments of God and observed the Appointed Times of the LORD with the weekly Sabbath and Festivals. When the Apostle Paul came on the scene, he found himself to be a leader among the Gentiles. He was a Roman citizen born in Tarsus and was able to bridge the understanding between being an observant Jew and relating to his fellow Gentile citizens.

Paul traveled back and forth from Jerusalem to the various lands, keeping Sabbath, teaching in synagogues, and worshiping in the temple. In fact, he was arrested while in the temple assisting four other Messianic Jewish brothers to complete their Nazirite vows (a specific commandment of the Law). He had gone there to assist them in an effort to prove that he (Paul) kept the Law since a rumor had arisen that he was teaching believers to do otherwise.

So how did we shift so radically from the Sabbath and Festivals to church and all of its traditions and customs? It took a couple hundred years, but eventually the Gentile leaders didn't want any more Jewish believers in their ranks. Eventually, where they were going to worship, when they will worship, and how they were going to worship became critical issues. That took a few more years to sort out and "poof" we had a state church with Constantine. Along with it came the canonization of the Bible and "Church Law."

The "church fathers" were responsible for the doctrines, customs, and laws of the church. The customs of the apostles and the first believers were dismissed. I have actually heard churchmen describe how the apostles and disciples were all in error in their days as compared to the church of today.

When I turned back to the teaching of Moses and the Messiah, I realized that the church fathers had done exactly what the Pharisees and Sadducees had done. They had added to and taken away from the truth. I also learned that church leaders are not bashful to admit this claiming that they had the authority to do what they have done. They claimed that this authority came from the New Covenant that had "replaced" the teaching of Moses. They claimed that all of that previous stuff was "nailed to the cross."

## **The book of Hebrews teaches "replacement theology"**

In Sunday school, I was taught that the Holy Bible was the Word of God. Beginning with Genesis and extending through the book of Revelation (minus the Apocrypha which is only in the Catholic Bibles) I had the final complete word of God. There was "no more" word from God and it was the "only" word of

God. I was also taught that there were no errors in the Bible, it was completely trustworthy.

Most Christians have no foggy idea how we got our Bibles today. In a humorous sort of way, I have told others that Yeshua handed the first copy of the New Testament to Peter and John just before ascending into the clouds from the Mount of Olives and He instructed them to run down to the Kinko's Copy Center and run off a quick 50 copies. I am careful not to say this too often as I have learned that some brethren will actually believe this if I said it happened.

Actually, the Old Testament was not “canonized” by Judaism until about 90 A.D. by Yochanan Ben Zakkai (the first Rabbi of Pharisaic Judaism). The New Testament was not “canonized” until around 400 A.D. when Jerome compiled it for the church. Little do believers know that there were major arguments among the church fathers as to what should be taught and included in the Bible. One of the last books compiled with the canon was the book of Hebrews.

It is a fascinating issue because the church fathers at that time didn't want Jewish believers to have any say in how the church was being run, but the book did say something that the church fathers did want. They wanted some kind of authority to justify all of the changes they had made from the teaching and customs of the first century Apostles.

The book of Hebrews is a theological book arguing against the original customs and traditions of the first believers (Jews). For example, it argues against the Levites as a priesthood and promotes the order of Melchizedek. Did you know that Catholicism teaches that their priests are of that order? The book argues that the Old Covenants of Adam, Abraham, Moses, and David are obsolete having been replaced by the “New” covenant. Even further, the book discourages believers from eating or participating in ceremonies conducted in Jerusalem (the Feasts of the LORD such as Passover through Tabernacles).

By the way, this is not just my opinion on the book and its teaching. Martin Luther, the leader of the reformation and the beginning of Protestant Christianity, argued this as well.

In Sunday school, I was taught that God replaced Israel with the Church. I was taught that all of the customs of Israel were replaced with the customs of the Church. I was told that the book of Hebrews says this and that Paul wrote the book of Hebrews right along with Galatians. Paul did write the book of Galatians, but he did not write the book of Hebrews. The writer of Hebrews is unknown. Given the literary evidence in the book, it is a pretty good assessment that the book was written in the second century or later by a Greek believer with an extensive Greek vocabulary beyond even the Apostle Paul. He even made a couple of blunders trying to copy what Moses said in the Law.

When I learned what Moses and the Messiah really taught, I realized that there were a number of agendas and power games taking place in the church, just like what happened in Judaism. It became obvious to me that the precepts

and traditions of man were invading Christianity just like it did Judaism. I also learned from the Messiah that I should follow the commandments of God and not follow the precepts and traditions of men.

As I have said before, I do not follow church law (canon); I follow the Torah and believe that Yeshua of Nazareth is the Messiah. I believe in the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob.

### **The Pretrib rapture is the doctrine of “imminency”**

In Sunday school, I was taught that the Messiah would one day be returning. I was also taught that He would gather all the believers and we would go to heaven, while everyone else would go to hell.

Later, as a young man I began to read end-time prophecy books and listened to motivated speakers talk about the day we lived in. All of this led me to believe that the LORD’s return was soon. In fact, I became aware of the *pretribulation rapture* doctrine. The “rapture” teaching said that God had the sovereign right to come back to Earth anytime He wanted to, gather us up, and judge the world. Some emphasized that God would choose the days just as the seven-year tribulation would begin, thus it was called the *pretribulation rapture*, but the specific doctrine declared that nothing was blocking God from returning at any day or night.

The verses in the Bible that Pretrib proponents quoted for the rapture were from the letters of Paul.

*Behold, I tell you a mystery; we shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed, in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet; for the trumpet will sound, and the dead will be raised imperishable, and we shall be changed.*

### **I Corinthians 15:51-52**

*But we do not want you to be uninformed, brethren, about those who are asleep, that you may not grieve, as do the rest who have no hope. For if we believe that Yeshua died and rose again, even so God will bring with Him those who have fallen asleep in Yeshua. For this we say to you by the word of the Lord, that we who are alive, and remain until the coming of the Lord, shall not precede those who have fallen asleep. For the Lord Himself will descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trumpet of God; and the dead in Messiah shall rise first. Then we who are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in*

*the clouds to meet the Lord in the air, and thus we shall always be with the Lord. Therefore comfort one another with these words.*

### **I Thessalonians 4:13-18**

I was taught that these two verses describe the rapture and there is nothing to describe “when” they happen. Instead, they will happen suddenly – no man knows the day or hour – and that God can come imminently. In fact, the correct name, according to theologians, is that the rapture is the doctrine of Imminency.

What I learned from Moses and the Messiah did not line up with this doctrine and modern belief in the least. I learned that God has planned out everything even before the foundations of the world. There is no happenstance with God. Let’s be clear here – I am not a Calvinist. I am referring to God’s character and His plan. I learned that God’s plan has been revealed to us both in prophecy and patterns of historical events.

*Remember the former things long past, for I am God, and there is no other; I am God, and there is no one like Me, declaring the end from the beginning and from ancient times things which have not been done, saying, “My purpose will be established, and I will accomplish all My good pleasure, calling a bird of prey from the east, the man of My purpose from a far country. Truly I have spoken; truly I will bring it to pass. I have planned it, surely I will do it.”*

### **Isaiah 46:9-11**

*God is not a man, that He should lie, nor a son of man, that He should repent; has He said, and will He not do it? Or has He spoken, and will He not make it good?*

### **Numbers 23:19**

Religious men like to place themselves at the center of the Universe and as the centerpiece of the Heavenly plan. The truth is that God is King of the Universe and we are here because of His gracious choice. Men would like to set the agenda for God and tell Him how to run His kingdom, which is foolishness. Based on the character of God alone, the doctrine of Imminency is the vain imaginations of religious men.

Let’s examine again those prophecies about His return. There are clues that tell us about God’s plan. Do you remember that part about the trumpets – *at the last trumpet; for the trumpet will sound?*

I learned from Moses and the Messiah that He would return at the resurrection when trumpets would sound. I discovered that one of God's Appointed Times, the *Feast of Trumpets*, is the prophetic picture and part of God's plan for the resurrection, just before the Day of the LORD and beginning of His kingdom. The Messiah said it this way.

*But immediately after the tribulation of those days the sun will be darkened, and the moon will not give its light, and the stars will fall from the sky, and the powers of the heavens will be shaken, and then the sign of the Son of Man will appear in the sky, and then all the tribes of the earth will mourn, and they will see the Son of Man coming on the clouds of the sky with power and great glory. And He will send forth His angels with a great trumpet and they will gather together His elect from the four winds, from one end of the sky to the other.*

### **Matthew 24:29-31**

It turns out that the rapture is the resurrection for those that have not died yet and are alive when the resurrection happens. It also turns out that God has planned to do this not before (pretrib) the tribulation but instead *after* the tribulation. That, of course, means that the end-time believers in the last generation will be a part of the Great Tribulation and have to survive it to see the Son of Man returning. But more importantly, this is what God has planned.

But what about that verse that says *no man knows the hour or the day*? When you keep the Feast of Trumpets on 1 Tishri, you learn that is an expression about the new Moon. No one knows exactly when 1 Tishri is until you see the new Moon. This expression was not about the lack of knowledge about His return, it is a reference to the Feast of Trumpets and how the Messiah will fulfill that feast.

There are many other things that Sunday school did not teach me about the faith. In fact, Sunday school taught me many things that were not correct. For those of us in the Messianic movement, we find ourselves shedding off that previous instruction and trying to learn what is the truth from Moses and the Messiah.

There is one thing I did learn that is good from Sunday school. They taught me to "trust and obey" the LORD. It is too bad that we didn't do it. They also taught me about Jesus. I am truly thankful for that. It's too bad they didn't teach me His Hebrew name Yeshua. But I am still grateful to God for what I learned in Sunday school and from my teachers. They did love God and me. They wanted

the best for me. I believe that God will reward them. For without them, I'm not sure if I would have been able to learn from Moses and the Messiah.

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*YAVOH - He is Coming* is a monthly newsletter published as an outreach ministry of Lion and Lamb Ministries. The ministry is a non-profit organization with an end time prophetic message in a Messianic Jewish context. Subscription to *YAVOH - He is Coming* is without cost and supported only by donation.

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